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THE FIVE MINISTERS.

A SERMON

IN

WEST CHURCH,

BY C. A. BARTOL,

ON THE

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FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS ORDINATION.

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY A. WILLIAMS & CO.
283 WASHINGTON STREET.
1877.

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12 October 1900

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A SERMON.

"*And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years.*" — DEUTERONOMY viii, 2.

Is it a religious duty, then, to recollect the past, which I have heard some philosophers call a dead weight we drag at our heels? In no pages is the past deed or word put so oft and aptly as in those of the transcendental essayist by whom the past is decried! Yes, I shall glorify the past to-day. I like things with long roots: they have long branches too.

The past, in some sense, is dead. So is the bark of a tree, nursling in your garden, or California pine; but the bark, although in the great Sequoia but corky matter a foot thick, was once of the innermost living substance, which it alone protects from death still. So, antique tradition is a safeguard against destruction of all that in the present we prize. We doubtless have intuitions of truth. He that gave an eye to the body did not leave it out of the mind. But experience is preparation and condition of insight, and experimental science to-day, in matter and spirit, is the redress and balance of that spiritualism which would else become a ghost-seeing materialism, a will of the wisp, with all manner of illusions to lead us astray.

As King Saul then bowed himself when the woman with a familiar spirit brought back dead Samuel to his sight, so I shall count upon your reverence as, with no witchcraft, I

present the figures of the past ministers of the West Church, believing that as was said of old, "like people, like priest"; and as the congregation expresses in its choice of a leader the character he in turn forms or confirms in them, so in its clergy I shall portray the Society which for history has been incorporate in no other way.

First, William Hooper, who gathered the West Boston Church, or for whom it was gathered, in 1737, just one hundred and forty years ago, and who was its minister nine years. Wishing to seize in each one the salient trait, I shall call him the *Churchman;* for he surprised and grieved his people by suddenly sundering his relation with them, and, with no warning or explanation, reverting to the Establishment, leaving his flock in the lurch without a shepherd, as he sailed for England, I believe, on the Lord's day. The high-spirited man, whose son was a signer of the Declaration of American Independence, seems to have been vexed with a clerical inquisition into his views of the divine nature as merciful and not vengeful to visit transgressors with eternal woe. To preach God as eternal avenger he would not be forced. He thought the Lord's brethren were harder than the bishops in the House of Lords, and sought a refuge from the ecclesiatical tyranny of Puritanism in the Episcopal hierarchy. The little finger of the first was thicker to him than the loins of the last, and chastisement with whips preferable to that with scorpions. I doubt not the Puritanic reign, for severity, was at times somewhat like that of Rehoboam, and I do not wonder a gentle and noble soul like Hooper's should have resented it and have fled to the horns of the ancient altar, — as when Rehoboam and Jeroboam came with their hard taxes and grim idols, Israel regretted Solomon. I am only sorry that Hooper, who does not seem to have been catechized or interfered with in his liberty by his own people, did not stay and fight it out

on the line of his own convictions, and so anticipate for us the day of redemption from covenants and creeds. They whom he deserted do not appear to have pursued him with any syllable of reproach; perhaps they sympathized with his ingenuous indignation at being called to book and taken so roughly to task. But as, with a retrograde movement in position, however forward in personal freedom, he cast down his armor and retreated from the field to an inclosed and impregnable fort of safety where were then no battles to fight; and as he was, so far as I know, never much heard of in any connection again, I must call him, with all his spirit of frankness and gifts of eloquence, the *Churchman*. I cannot get him higher in our gallery than the picture of the priest, noble and generous as he was.

But to compensate for his failure or withdrawal, a prophet indeed, a patriot, and a statesman was to come in the person of Jonathan Mayhew, our Moses in this region, the prince in power and influence of American divines. Settled in this ministry in the year 1747, he died in 1766, in the forty-sixth year of his age, "of a nervous fever, overplied with public energies," as the inscription runs on the old engraving, in my possession, of his face. He was churchman, too, in the sense of loving the church with a zeal like his Master's for the house of the Lord, with which he was eaten up; but the church was no building of brick and wood, no quiet cathedral to him. It was the church militant he belonged to, not that of those that be at ease in Zion. It was the gospel-trumpet he blew to the conflict, and not a pleasant sound, as of one who could play well on an instrument.

"Captain or Colonel or Knight-at-arms,"

as in the line of John Milton's sonnet, he seemed. As the mediæval monks and crusaders wore steel mail over their

frocks, so he was girt in finer panoply for the fray. The artist has chosen to put his face on the cracked and crumbling walls as of an ancient temple, with vivacious plants springing out of the rents of mortared ruin, and under his breast laurel-boughs in a wreath of bay, with mitre and crosier suspended, as if cast down beneath, the green and budding sprigs having the likeness of quills, while on the foundation-stone the large letters declare him "an assertor of the civil and religious liberties of his country and mankind." "The soul is an active poison," said the German Novalis: so it worked in his mortal frame. The sword cut through the scabbard, the flame burnt up the flesh, as it did Shakespeare's so early, and many another man's. He was our political genius as much as Otis or Adams, who knew and owned him for their peer. He was a martyr and living sacrifice in his own desk and in the councils of the righteous before Warren fell on Bunker Hill. He, like David, lay in his bed and meditated on God in the night watches; and as the brightest thoughts are said to come on first waking, before the cock crows, and as Napoleon declared the best courage was at four o'clock in the morning, so an idea, like an inspiration from heaven, flashed on him ere he arose for the communion as one of the Lord's days was ready to dawn, in June, 1766, only a few weeks before his death. He was thinking of the communion of the churches, and he wrote at once to Otis of "the great use and importance of a communion of the colonies." *Communion of the churches and communion of the colonies!* Why not? Then was America conceived! How the bosom of time, day by day, grew big with her promise! Native land, as a land of freedom, was itself, on these shores, a conception of religion. "Where the spirit of the Lord is," this modern, like the ancient, Paul knew, "there is liberty." She herself drew nigh and formed her own image in the

heart and brain of a man and a minister in the visions of the night. She went forth, loving and holy, from the board of the Lord's supper. She issued — let us not forget it — from the temple-door to walk large, as the Indian said, abroad. She was framed in the imagination and virgin anticipation of a saintly mind before she trod the soil in actual mien and sober fact. The Spirit of God, that brooded at first on the waters, also brooded for her over a human breast. After that, all was but a process of gestation and birth, a ten years' labor, till the voice of cannon announced her from the brain, Minerva-like, in 1776.

Said Louis Kossuth, "*I like not to hear Faneuil Hall called the Cradle of Liberty:* it has a savor of mortality." Could liberty be born, then, like other mortal things, liberty could die. But liberty, that never began or was born in this country, with immortal life and virtue, descended from on high through the pious musings of a Christian soul; and it was not she, so much as the love for her, that was to grow in these United States as in any place of assembly in the old peninsula it was nursed and rocked. I confess, as the "Mayflower," in the little paper drawn up in her cabin, held the charter of our privilege, — all our constitutions in embryo and a continent of equity in a written leaf, — so all that was to follow of resistance to taxation without representation, and of collisions with British troops in Concord and Lexington, till independence was secured, lay in Mayhew's waking dream. As I seem to hearken to his telling it as he got up in the morning to commemorate the Lord, I catch a far-off echo of his voice in the tread of hosts, rattle of musketry, and clash of swords yet to come; nor is there aught more sacred in the Spanish artist Murillo's sublime painting of "The Conception" than in the first conscious pleading of a people's claim to exist and the throes of agony in which a new nation was to be shown among nations on the face of the earth.

Our union a century ago, our reunion — God grant it to endure forever! — out of the still fresh baptism of blood, was in the primal germ that Mayhew beheld, planted and tended till he died.

Even in his theology, Dr. Mayhew was patriot still, opposing Episcopacy, not only on grounds of reason, Scripture, and history, but as itself an ally of the throne. Truly, he made Hooper's defection more than good; but his peculiar originality was in being, as Dr. James Freeman testifies, "the first preacher of Unitarianism in Boston and his religious Society the first Unitarian church," — *Freeman*, himself, well named, taking afterwards the liberty and having the strength to move King's Chapel clear over from the Trinitarian ground, surely lifting and carrying a heavy weight! Mrs. Wainwright, Dr. Mayhew's daughter, who had a spirit akin to his own, affirms that he publicly asserted the unity of God in many sermons long before, as early as 1753; and when Dr. Cooper, visiting him on his death-bed, anxiously inquired if he still retained his religious sentiments, with a faint expiring pressure he answered, "I hold fast my integrity and will not let it go," — as grand and significant a dying speech as was ever made; for his belief was so vital that part of his integrity it was.

Next in order comes, in 1767, settled with an ecclesiastical unanimity which Mayhew did not command, Dr. Simeon Howard, whom I shall call the *Philanthropist*, like his English namesake, although he, too, preached politics, as Dr. Willard, President of Harvard University, defended him for doing, after Howard's death; but I think that love of man, humanity, was his characteristic trait. When, in 1775, the British troops suspect that the handsome steeple of the West Boston Church had been used for signals to the Continental soldiers in Cambridge, they razed it to the ground and turned the building into a barrack; but Howard

stood by his charge. As the whirlwind fell, which Mayhew had done so much to raise, Howard relinquished all claim to pecuniary support and ferried his Society across the Bay of Fundy to Nova Scotia. Being himself arrested, taken to Halifax, and afterwards released, and finding the people of the territory rebellious and inflammable, he soothed and comforted them, as there was no prospect of mending their affairs. Seeing some young men one day screwing stones into bundles of hay, he dissuaded them, as he did not think it right to cheat even the enemies of his country in the quality of their supplies. By his self-sacrifice for his church he raised it at length from its depression, and made it one of the most prosperous in the town, when, had he insisted on his dues, it would have been destroyed. As, surveying a portrait, given by an old friend and parishioner, Thomas Kilby Jones, to what is now my own family, I peruse in it the meek and gracious features of Howard's face, I feel it is all owing to him that I am a minister here and that this Society still exists.

I come now into the delighted reminiscences of many of your number, when I name next Dr. Charles Lowell, the *Independent;* for though no preacher or disciple was ever more devout, patriotic, and sympathetic than Lowell, yet what marked him out from other men in his office was his personal bearing, of such dignity, and his Christian self-respect. Nobody ever lived more lowly before God; nobody ever lived who stood among his fellows more firm on his own feet. In his human constitution was a poise of grace divine. It took shape in his beauty of form and feature; for he was as handsome a creature as it has been our fortune to see in flesh and blood. I remember my impression of him, meeting once Judge Lemuel Shaw in the same eminent company, that there was no more striking figure than that of Lowell, then a stranger to me, in the room. Love was incarnate with the

quick sense of honor in his frame. Fresh in mind is my call on him, in 1840, on his return from Europe, when his eye shone to me with such affection across the apartment in his daughter's house, it seemed as if a sunbeam had burst suddenly in. But no less grand than tender was his mien. There was iron in his blood, and a granite firmness rang always through the rare melody of his voice, like a cliff jarring to the mellow surge. Glad to comfort and commune, he never lost in any fellowship *himself;* and in the precise quality of his individuality he stood alone. Even Channing leaned more than he. His great heart was manned with so mighty a will that, amid all the stormy sectarian divisions and dissensions of his day, he never swayed or swung. He was not willow, but oak. It was a singularity of his conviction and his make, a marvel of separation from party strife, on which Dr. Channing, in some surprise, to me once remarked. At the ordination of Dr. Wisner, at that Old South Church lately so much in litigation and debate, Lowell having been chosen to give the right hand of fellowship to the candidate, yet at the last moment rejected by the council, was not driven into any partisan bias even by treatment so rude. Certainly the test was severe. He never meddled with others' prerogatives nor suffered his own to be meddled with. He was jealous of consociated or associated interference, declared that he or his church would not be subject to human authority or any earthly yoke, "No, not for an hour." His most frequent and importunate warning to me was to avoid entangling alliances of every denominational sort. Dr. Freeman said he was the best man that ever lived. His goodness was so perfect and so great, that he gave to none the least opportunity to take offence, unless at this majesty of his religious port; notwithstanding which he was ready, when reason offered in any matter, to change his course. When I was ordained, there was a negro-gallery yonder, in

the space where the organ now stands, in which the colored men and women were seen every Sunday perched like crows. I represented to my colleague my own and some of my friends' wish to abolish that structure and call our black fellow-creatures down from the ceiling into the pews. He resisted my appeal; but some time after, as I called on him at his house, where he was confined by a lame foot, he said to me, "I have, in my chamber here, been reflecting on your request, and am inclined to take your view." How zealously anti-slavery indeed he afterwards became, so that an aged parishioner, in consequence of the reading of an anti-slavery memorial in this desk, inquired if Dr. Lowell was not breaking down! Another old worshipper, who, as a mechanic, was concerned in the building of the first meeting-house, when the Africans were invited and descended actually from the roof to the floor, in unappeasable wrath wholly withdrew.

Dr. Lowell honored the service of the sanctuary, but had no liking for extra evening meetings of the revival kind. "They who attend such," he said to brethren and sisters, "may not go to be seen of men, but they *are* seen of men,"—a distinction whose nicety showed how well he could discriminate as well as exhort. The genius in him, which was manifest in his countenance, manner, and tone, has both during and after his earthly career been evinced, how conspicuously to the country's honor, in the life and literary works of his children.

Will any of the rising generation, as of that which knew not Joseph, say I am but acting over again the part of Old Mortality, of that Joseph Paterson celebrated by Walter Scott, who in a blue bonnet, on an old white pony and with a chisel in his hand, in Scotland, went riding among the hills and heaths to remove the moss and deepen the inscriptions on the Covenanters' graves? Not quite so! What matter

where the body is laid? Our predecessors' souls are in no churchyard or grave, but as near as our souls to each other. So it is if so we feel!

Although this occasion of a forty years' ministry seems to be my own, I could not leave out my predecessors; however, I must ask, for the account of my stewardship, your patience yet a little while.

If Dr. Lowell was the *Independent*, who said to me he approved of humbling one's self before God but not before men, yet that he had identified himself with his own Society, while he bent to no dogmatic creed, thinking practice in religion more important than theory, what shall your fifth and I trust not last minister be called but a *Free Thinker*, — that still odious name, from so richly deserving which all my troubles have come? On his fiftieth anniversary, Dr. Lowell could aver, "It has been a ministry without a cloud." With how different a fortune I have been obliged to get what comfort I could out of Christ's saying to his disciples, "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you!"

It was a cold, blowy, and blustering first of March, 1837, — just like last Thursday, the centennial-date of the church, — when I was ordained. All are gone — Lowell, Ware, Upham, Cunningham — who took important part in the service; and if the gusty wind we fluttered through to church was prelude of breezy spells in the moral sphere, were not the bright sun, pure air, and blue heaven calm over all, warrant, perhaps, of a wholesome agitation? I was a born Rationalist, who in all things must see the reason. Ever since reading Coleridge's "Aids to Reflection" in my college-days, and catching up with Channing and Wordsworth in due time, I was confirmed in the congenital temper of my mind, which naturally went on in the way of the manifesto, during and after 1833, in Concord and Boston, modified by common-sense, but which, whenever I have spoken, has been

accepted but in part. I became as impracticable as my predecessor was erect and upright. The chief measure to which by the mood of my philosophy I was compelled, was to take up the line betwixt the congregation and the church, to which my senior colleague consented only because else my pastorate would have ceased; and for which some of my clerical brethren said, if I persisted, I should be pursued to the end. Indeed, I had some rather rude rebuffs from my own friends; and an old parishioner affirmed I was going to destroy the Unitarian denomination; to which another replied, in substance, though this is my phrase, It must be a card-castle indeed, could it be pulled down so by me! Dividing a religious assembly into two classes, and making the benediction the sword, seemed to me unscriptural, unchristian, and unreasonable alike. But I think Parker himself encountered no fiercer whirlwind, while it lasted, than I did. It sank, however, as suddenly as it rose. It was like the rapid discharge of guns by the flying-artillery on the common. Nobody was killed; and when the bellowing had stopped, scarce a bit of burnt wadding was by any wayfarer to be picked up. The old fashion none now wish to restore.

When, ~~later~~, it was proposed to gather the somewhat open and loose Unitarianism of the country into a stricter bond of doctrine and form, and we were invited to send delegates to New York *authorized to represent our convictions and pledged to pay great respect to the convention* there called, I resented the summons as an assault on the Christian privilege and local liberty of the church; and a year or two after, in 1867, on my thirtieth anniversary, I preached a discourse justifying my stand, the occasion being thought of sufficient moment to request a meeting after service of the whole Society. Under the lead of Charles G. Loring, who, as friend and Sunday-school superintendent, had served it as effectually as any of its clergy, and who told me he thought

the soul and not the book was the source of inspiration, the position was unanimously vindicated which I had assumed. I had, previously, while this denominational drum-beat resounded, called a meeting for comparing notes, as the Romans in some crises met, *that the republic might receive no harm*, at my house, which thus became the birthplace of the radical clubs so called, which have been such valuable instruments of ecclesiastical emancipation since. All the Unitarians afterwards repudiated and dropped the original stringency of any *Episcopizing* plan, although they must remember, with some shame, what narrow literal propositions for union against heresy were, at the hands of now no longer trusted but apostate leaders, in some of the synods made. Dr. James Walker, in his latter days a conservative man, occupying, in his own expression to me, the left-centre between the two wings of the liberal body, told me I had the history of my own church on my side; I had also its concurrent vote. Strangely enough, as you may think it, although in some sort a parent, I have never been a member of any radical or free religious club. Host and speaker and sometime presiding moderator I have been, but not committed to any organization or responsible for its positions or acts, as I have no more received than I originated many of the views and judgments that have passed under such names.

Maintaining the supremacy of spirit, I have never been anti-Christian or unchristian, although he, from whom the staple of these phrases came, ere he died, left the door wide open for all to be extra-Christian who can. "Room for talent," cried Napoleon. Place, I say, for honesty and free thought! Policy leads to diplomacy, and diplomacy to duplicity, and duplicity to death. My amazement, my mortification has been to see how many religious people would tell benevolent lies! It is a sin or disease in the scandals of our day, from which it will, despite the loudest revivals, take a generation

for orthodoxy to recover; and from which it concerns the health of Christianity to be thoroughly washed, else Christianity itself would die.

Pardon for once my length. It is said the preacher has this advantage, that nobody on the spot can reply. But in revenge there is no such butt of criticism as he, — sometimes as a deep and salutary probe; sometimes, as that same wise Walker said, a *small* criticism of his appearance and manner and the tie and color of his cravat. Yet I remember one sentence of my own Portland pastor, Ichabod Nichols, in his address to the Boston clergy, — that from unfair or petty strictures the minister must retire to the dignity of his own persuasions and the security of self-respect. Whoever tramples on them, let him value his pearls. I am a veteran so scarred I am now not sensitive to blows, however people think my feelings are hurt.

I must not omit our relation to the country in the crisis of its fortunes and its agony of civil war. Not one of my forerunners, Hooper, Mayhew, Howard, Lowell, but must have smiled and almost wept with joy in heaven at your fidelity to their lessons when the test hour of practice had indeed come. "He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied," saith Isaiah of the coming man and Messiah, to save the nation, in prophecy dimly discerned. O pure and fiery heart of our great *political* Messiah, a century and a quarter ago, a John Brown of thy time, and no lover of chains for body or mind, though bearing *Jonathan* for thy gentle name, wast thou not pleased with thy own church, to thy successors sacredly bequeathed, when it sent more than seventy men to the front in the ordeal of battle to settle this question betwixt bondage and unfettered limbs? At last was not what was needful to thy felicity, among the angels, supplied from the earth? Surely no crown on thy head and no palm in thy hand, so long celestially held

and worn amid the seraphim, could be such delight to one of thy motive and mould as this prevalence of the nation thou didst toil for and labor with, when at length it conquered, because it was purged; and the parturition of freedom, it takes ages to accomplish, came to pass.

If an again threatening peril to the State in a sorely contested election has been escaped, perhaps to the former faithfulness and present intercession of ascended patriots it is due. If there be "joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth," how much more when that sinner is a repentant land! O fathers that sent your sons to the field, O mothers that bore them in pain, O maidens or wives that loved them more than yourselves, mourn not that they ransomed with their blood the common mother of us all!

Welcome, unanimous at last, to the old warriors and witnesses, with Garrison, their leader and head. More fortunate he than Warren that fell on Bunker Hill, or than Lafayette whom Webster also apostrophized; for his eyes behold a greater victory in a battle he waged without the sword, and by suffering and sacrifice won. His service to his country and his race, no monument — far off still be the day of its erection! — can ever tell. He is historical while he lives. May he yet continue to forward every good though struggling cause, of temperance and universal right, with his word of mighty aid, even as he joins in and honors our commemoration of departed worthies to-day!

I also have had my light and little cross to bear. For a number of years I was a sort of alien and exile from the commonwealth of our Israel. Exchanges in Unitarian and Universalist pulpits were refused me. Now I am cordially asked to the conference, convention, association, ordination, — not because I have gone back or stopped, but the world forward! I am warmly congratulated on being an

affirmative preacher at last. When have I ever been anything else? I see some yet, as heretofore, carrying denial beyond me and speculation apparently to excess; but where once I ran alone in dangerous but not barren places, I am in good and growing company. One thing let me say, my mouth has never been shut here. What I could not speak without rebuke and official scoring on a Free Religious platform, you patiently heard. This, more than any come-outer club or hall, has been to me the banner-place for free discussion, however you may have thought, in regard to the great nineteenth-century offence and ecclesiastical volcano, or any other matter, that I was too confident in my judgment, insisted too much on Christian and clerical purity, or exaggerated my theme. Wait the record of the providential iron pen,—that the orthodox church, unable to grapple with guilt, has lost for ages some moral repute!

Will my people and my friends, thousand-fold more than I can cover with that first dear name, pardon and bear with, or at least tolerate, references which I alone, at the bar of God and history, must answer for on a subject than which none has ever rested on my mind with a more painful weight, impute to me whoso will, imprudence, impropriety, and wrong? I know how many there still appear to be to whom no sin has been in this matter proven in any quarter on either side, or who possibly regard as venial conduct medically affirmed to be a greater curse to the human constitution than intemperance, so called. Some hate the names worse than the evil things denominated, and must wish to expurgate the Bible as well as the minister's discourse. To them all this continental and cosmopolite stir is a senseless pother about what may turn out pure innocence after all. There are also those who seem to think it a mere matter of choice with the preacher what he shall say or omit! If he be silent, it is his wisdom; or if he speak, his whim. If he persist in

his message, they have no better name for him than *stubborn;* if, Jonah-like, he waive the Lord's bidding, he is just the priest a majority of the sensible ones want.

But I am that unhappy man John Milton speaks of, with whom, when the Spirit orders, there is no option whether or not to raise a *dolorous blast.* I am that watchman on the walls of whom the Hebrew prophet declares if he blow not the trumpet the blood of the slain will be required at his hands, and who sees so very many exposed to peril in a war more terrible than was ever waged with the sword; and if any, even of my beloved, fancy some huge ecclesiastical iniquity to be but as a stain that can be wiped from the floor, to me it is rather like the unwashable spot in a Holyrood Palace, to remove which the substance must be destroyed through which it strikes. Even a religion — call it Christian, if you will — that should endure and be saturated with it must give way. With naught but kindness for all persons, I must mix faithfulness in every righteous task; so, only to the Christianity I am set and expected to hold forth, I am a true friend; and whatever may become of any orthodoxy or heresy or church, in the battle for truth and sanctity I must not faint or turn back. I received from New York, in return for public words, vague, vindictive, anonymous insinuations, to which I made no answer at the time. My only reply now is to adjure any man, woman, or child, in the body or out, whom I ever in any way have wronged or hurt, by their voice or letter, by telegraph or telephone, through any medium from earth, or heaven, or hell, to speak. No slander against your minister has credit with his flock. What love and trust I have had from you, my friends, and have returned the same! I have not sought what is called distinguished society: yours has been enough. I have found that of the sick and sad and dead the most instructive and luminous, cheering and profitable, on earth. I have denounced hypocrisy in the

community, the pulpit, and the press. If I have gone too far, lay it not to me, but to the demon that drove me, — a demon, I trust, not wholly bad.

I find myself to-day the oldest minister by settlement in Boston, in a parish with the sole charge. Have I stayed too long? I am informed by a wise doctor, who has been often consulted by superannuated officers, that to such a question no corporation, however religious, ever gave or will ever give a sincere reply. I must not be an incumbrance; yet I would not inflict a ghastly wound by too suddenly cutting the tie. To your sincerity have I not a righteous claim, in my own? I shall be injured and ungratefully treated if allowed to remain as on my own account, instead of yours. I hereby release you from all obligation, and remand my office into your hands. I request a reduction of my salary for whatever period I may remain. I have no longer for you plans of my own. I shall yield to any proposals for the preservation and future prosperity of the church — the only one surviving its fellows in this quarter of the town — which, at your annual meeting, you may make.

O my supporters, stanch and steadfast, women almost more than men, members of this church, if thwart or hurt to any one of you has ever come from me, it was not of my will! It was against my will! The madness has been not in my temper, but my thought. Sacrifice for an idea, more than for any body, is to me the noblest of passions. When the idea comes, if it be genuine, wife or child, pewholder or friend, must not stand in the way. Lo! it takes us like tools for its ends. It alone is divine. It is God in the human soul. It is the stone Jesus spoke of, to fall on which is to be broken, and to have it fall on one, to be ground to powder! I am glad, I am proud, I thank you and God to-day, that the records of your church, for a hundred and forty years, contain no attempt at its hindrance, but encouragement only, in any of its servants and devotees.

Will you, of this audience, please accept my clerical portrait-gallery as a memorial of this day? May I say my free-thinking has never hindered my familiar visiting? I have stood over a thousand coffins and by many thousand beds of disease, yet I have been with Jesus in the wilderness, and Paul in Arabia, and John the Baptist in the desert, and John the Evangelist in Patmos, and Elijah with the ravens and in the chariot of fire.

> The spirit drives me from the throng;
> Dear is my thought, it holds me long:
> The spirit draws me back again, —
> Dearer I find my fellow-men.

Yes, dearer for all my thinking and knowing! Let God in his goodness permit me to live with my kind. I ask of him no lot, here or hereafter, different from that of my race. If the most of men are going to hell, in this respect at least let me go with the majority! Somehow, somewhere, some time, we shall be together; for we live in a universe.

I am sure to say what somebody will not like! In theology I have taught you not to depend wholly on texts or interpretations. What have we in the canon but a few sketches of God's great portfolio? What is Christ but the flower of humanity and blossom of divinity, at once descending from above and rising from the dust, restoring the Father's image and gracing the family-tree, Son of God and Son of man, interchangeable terms of identical sense, not two natures or a double, which were the devil, but, diversely viewed and denominated, one and the same!

But I have not been an expounder of dogma. What I know of religion is mainly from three sources: nature, human nature, and the divine nature, shown first of all and most of all in the moral sentiment of man; and I have lamented that the popular schemes, on false principles, not only neglect but disparage and despise them all, to the great loss both of sound knowledge and a pure life.

But I have not only reasoned with you about theology, the science of God: I have been familiarly and daily with unstinted affection under your roofs.

Being fearful lest my tendency from my cradle to muse, to see visions, and dream dreams, to have, as David so greatly said, "the Lord light my candle," and to turn the planet into my closet with him, might prevent my *calling* often, as did the man whose associate I was, on the people, I bound myself at the outset by a voluntary and mechanical rule — although my intercourse with you has itself never been mechanical — that I would make at least twelve visits in your houses every week. Often I made twice and thrice and quadruple that number in fact. If "sick and ye visited me" opens the door to heaven, some are there who will let me in!

It is the Fourth of March. Our celebration synchronizes with that of civil peace and order in Congressional deciding of the vexed question of the Presidency of the land, which, since Richmond fell, is the greatest of our events. Let none of either party indulge any sentiment above or other than gratitude for deliverance from a danger that might have become more terrible than secession itself. Democrat or Republican will have justice at last. Let them as patriots unite! God grant the civil sword rest henceforth forever in its sheath. God bless the outgoing President, and the incoming administration, for his people's good! God help us all, at whatever post he sets us, to discharge our duty; and in this world, which is such a dissolving view, as one after another of our beloved goes from our sight, may they leave, from their love and faithfulness, no shadow, but sunshine, behind! Meantime on us, as once on them, necessity is laid; and, though the gospel be glad tidings, woe will be unless we preach and hear.